

BIZBASH

At BizBash Boston Expo, Bryan Rafanelli Stresses Importance of Relationships

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The first BizBash Boston Expo took place at [Fenway Park](#) on Thursday, drawing 800 attendees and showcasing new products and ideas from more than 50 vendors. The day included panel and town hall discussions, 15-minute educational sessions from the Event Leadership Institute, and the presentation of the first local [Readers' Choice Awards](#). Bryan Rafanelli, founder, president, and C.E.O. of [Rafanelli Events](#)—who produced Chelsea Clinton's wedding last year—delivered the keynote address.



Entitled "Legacy Relationships," Rafanelli's speech stressed the importance of forming connections with other vendors. "The success in this city is relationships—how we come together, take care of each other, and grow our businesses," he said. After showing a photo montage of his staff—including golden retriever Henry, whose title is "love czar"—Rafanelli spoke about other local companies that support him and his crew.

"What's behind [my] team is a lot of people you see here [at the trade show], from [Peterson Party Center](#), [Be Our Guest](#), etc.," he said. "We have these deep relationships with companies in Boston that ... stand for what we stand for. They are always on top of the product that will best tell the story of our client."

Also, he said, "Boston people go other places." Showing photos from three state dinners he has produced at the White House in the past year, Rafanelli said he landed in Washington because of relationships he built, and that he in turn enlisted local companies such as [Winston Flowers](#) and [Table Toppers](#) to assist him with the high-profile events.

Rafanelli also provided insight on how he runs his business. Explaining that he comes from a family of lawyers, he said that his company bills by the hour. When it comes to forming a relationship with clients, "we sit down with them, hear what they want to do, and build a case. What comes out is a concept, a design, a brand, and a story."

Ultimately, he said, his clients "have the expectation that we'll bring something that inspires them, but also has a real connection to who they are. You have to listen to what gets them excited." By way of example, Rafanelli shared a detail on what inspires one of his more famous clients: "Mrs. Obama loves lighting."

—Jenny Berg